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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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Hideyuki Aoki

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EXAMINER

LIN, WEN TAI

ART UNIT

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PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 09/919,204	Applicant(s) AOKI ET AL.	
	Examiner Wen-Tai Lin	Art Unit 2454	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 31 October 2008.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,5,7-11,13-15,18,21,22,24-26,28,29 and 31 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,5,7, 9-11,13-15,18,21,22,24-26,28,29 and 31 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 8 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. Claims 1, 5, 7-11, 13-15, 18, 21-22, 24-26, 28-29 and 31 are presented for examination.
2. Applicant correctly pointed out that the prior art date shown on the front page of the publication of Kawashima [US 20050239454] was erroneous. The claim rejection based on Kawashima is hereby withdrawn.
3. The text of those sections of Title 35, USC code not included in this action can be found in the prior Office Action.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

4. Claims 21-22, 24-26, 28-29 and 31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being anticipated by Sheridan [U.S. Pat. No. 5760917].
5. Sheridan was cited in the previous office action.
6. As to claims 21, 25 and 29, Sheridan teaches a server/method/terminal to distribute information, comprising: a communication unit [e.g., Hub station 20, Fig.6] configured to receive a request including access destination information from a first terminal [e.g., 40A, Fig.6;

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note that the first terminal is the user who owns the photos and arranges various sharing groups as listed in Fig. 2] and distributing information to a plurality of terminals; and a processor controlling the communication unit to access to a content server [e.g., Hub station 21, Fig.6] and obtain the information by using the access destination information upon receiving of the request and to control the communication unit to distribute the information obtained from the content server to the plurality of terminals including a second terminal without receiving a request to receive the information from the second terminal [col.13, lines 13-42; note that any of the users on Fig. 2 can be the second terminal].

7. As claims 22 and 26, Sheridan teaches that the method further comprising storing the information in a storing unit and deleting the stored information after completion of the information distribution [e.g., col.3, lines 8-15; note that the “information” here is related to the access rights].

8. As to claims 24, 28 and 31, Sheridan further teaches that the access information identifies the content server and indicates data location in the content server [e.g., col.13, lines 28-41; it is further noted that a provider’s content database is typically organized with keys that specific content can be retrieved by specifying the name of a content which a user provides in the request].

9. Claims 1, 5, 9-11, 14-15 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sheridan [U.S. Pat. No. 5760917].

10. Sheridan was cited in the previous office action.

11. As to claim 1, Sheridan teaches the invention as claimed including: an information distribution device [e.g., Hub B, Fig.6] which is connected with a plurality of terminal devices [e.g., 40A – 40C, Fig.6] which belong to a group, and a content server storing distribution information via a network [e.g., Hub A, Fig. 6; col.13, lines 13-42] using an IP protocol, said information distribution device, comprising:

a first storage portion storing terminal information including addresses each identifying a terminal device belonging to said group, on the network using IP protocol [Figs. 1-2, col.4, lines 17-33, wherein a user may designated a group of (third party) terminal devices to whom the photographs would be shared; note that each email address is associated with an email provider's IP address];

a first receiving portion receiving, from one terminal device belonging to said group [e.g., 202, Fig.1], a distribution request including a Uniform Resource Location as access information [e.g., col. 5, lines 23-27], which is required for accessing the distribution information stored in the content server and distribution destination information specifying addresses on the network of other terminal devices that the one terminal device which belong to said group and to which the distribution information is to be distributed [col.4, lines 48-67; col.5, lines 7-18; col.13, lines 13-42];

a second receiving portion accessing said distribution information stored in a content server [e.g., any of Hubs A or B, Fig.6], based on said access information included in the distribution request received by said first receiving portion from the one terminal device, and for receiving the distribution information accessed [col.5, lines 31-42; note that the low-resolution images are derived from high resolution images originated in the scanner stations];

a second storage portion storing said distribution information accessed and received by said second receiving portion [e.g., the low-resolution images are transmitted from Hub A, Fig. 6 to Hub B, Fig. 6 stored temporarily therein for subsequent distribution/download]; and

a first transmitting portion transmitting said distribution information stored in said second storage portion to the other terminal devices [col.5, lines 31-64; e.g., the distribution server pushes low resolution photographs to the mailboxes belonging to the terminals of the group) via each service provider's IP address, allowing each terminal device to download the images therefrom].

Sheridan does not specifically teach having a third receiving portion receiving a bill of charges from the content server billing charges for the distribution information when the distribution information is chargeable; and a second transmitting portion transmitting said bill of charges received by said third receiving portion either to the one terminal device having transmitted the distribution request or to a telecommunications carrier to which the one terminal device subscribes.

However, charging media content or related distribution services is well known in the art. In Sheridan's two Hubs scenario, Hub A is connected to the scanner where the original file is

submitted. Thus Hub A contains information may include the film's low resolution image sets and user identification (col.5, lines 32-42). On the other hand, the user who makes the request (i.e., the requesting terminal) and other terminals of the granted group may also be connected to a different Hub (e.g., Hub B of Fig.6). As such, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to keep the billing information at the content server (i.e., Hub A), with charges sent to the Hub to which the requesting terminal (or the ISP of the requesting terminal) is connected because by doing so services payers do not have to be bounded to the Hub where the film is connected.

12. As to claim 5, Sheridan further teaches transmitting notification, to the terminal device which transmitted said distribution request, of the fact that distribution has been completed, after the distribution of said distribution information by said first transmitting portion [col.6, lines 13-24].

13. As to claim 9, Sheridan further teaches that said first receiving portion receives said distribution request from said terminal device via another server device [note that Sheridan's system is inherently able to receive terminal device transmitted via an ISP server because Sheridan's system is tied to the Internet (205, Fig.1)].

14. As to claim 10, Sheridan further teaches that said distribution information is either a program including a game program, said program and a license for said program, map information, or product information [note that photograph is a product information].

15. As to claims 11, 14-15 and 18, since the features of these claims can also be found in claims 1, 5 and 9-10, they are rejected for the same reasons set forth in the rejection of claims 1, 5 and 9-10 above.

16. Claims 7 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sheridan [U.S. Pat. No. 5760917], as applied to claims 1, 5, 9-11, 14-15 and 18, further in view of Official Notice.

17. As to claim 7, Sheridan does not specifically teach that said distribution request further includes a distribution time for specifying a time for distributing said distribution information, and said first transmitting portion distributes said distribution information at said distribution time.

However, Official Notice is taken that distributing information according to planned schedule is well known in the art. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to allow users of Sheridan's system to specify timing constraint or delivery time as an option because such feature serves good customer service, in particular when distribution of certain photos is time-sensitive.

18. As to claim 13, since the features of this claim can also be found in claims 1, 7 and 11, it is rejected for the same reasons set forth in the rejection of claims 1, 7 and 11 above.

19. Claim 8 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

20. Applicant's arguments filed on 10/31/08 for the rejected claims have been fully considered but they are not deemed to be persuasive.

21. In the Remarks Applicant argues that (1) Sheridan's scanner stations (which was mapped to the content server in the previous office action) do not provide URL for accessing the content; (2) Sheridan fails to teach the feature of a second receiving portion for receiving the distribution stored in the content server, based on the access information included in the distribution request; (3) the low resolution photographs or thumbnail images of Sheridan do not correspond to the claimed "first transmitting portion ... according to the distributed destination information"; and (4) the Scanners can not be the billing transmitting source.

22. In response, Applicant is directed to the two Hub scenario as outlined in Fig. 6, wherein Hub A is now mapped to the content server and Hub B is mapped to the distribution device. When the requesting terminal and/or some of the designated image sharing groups are connected to Hub B, all the above issues associated with points (1)-(4) would become clear or resolved.

To mature the claim language for allowance, Applicant is recommended to add the features of claim 8 to independent claims 1, 11 and 15, and cancel claims 21-31. Applicant's representative is welcome to call the examiner if there is any other issues to be clarified.

Conclusion

Examiner note: Examiner has cited particular columns and line numbers in the references as applied to the claims above for the convenience of the applicant. Although the specified citations are representative of the teachings of the art and are applied to the specific limitations within the individual claim, other passages and figures may apply as well. It is respectfully requested from the applicant in preparing responses, to fully consider the references in entirety as potentially teaching all or part of the claimed invention, as well as the contest of the passage as taught by the prior art or disclosed by the Examiner.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Wen-Tai Lin whose telephone number is (571)272-3969. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday(8:00-5:00).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Nathan Flynn can be reached on (571)272-1915. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are as follows:

(703)872-9306 for official communications; and

(571)273-3969 for status inquires draft communication.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Wen-Tai Lin

April 26, 2008

/Wen-Tai Lin/

Primary Examiner, Art Unit 2454